



CORAL GABLES *Homes*



Miami, Florida



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2011 with funding from
LYRASIS members and Sloan Foundation

<http://www.archive.org/details/coralgableshomes00merr>

CORAL GABLES

Miami Riviera



T is the special glory of Coral Gables that it possesses in surpassing degree those things which make for beautiful and comfortable homes. Coral Gables has an extraordinary endowment of natural beauty, a wide variety of native tropical and sub-tropical trees and shrubs. This has been further increased by magnificent development of parks, golf courses, playgrounds, by the building of broad boulevards and avenues, and in an especial manner by scientific landscaping, and the planting of trees, shrubs, and plants.

Also, Coral Gables has the homes themselves—nearly one thousand of them—visual proof of its distinctive and lasting beauty. Homes of native coral rock or stucco, with tiled roofs, charming loggias and patios. Colorful, inviting, livable homes which appeal to visitors quite as irresistibly as any other great feature of the suburb. A glance through the pages of this book will give you an idea of their individual attractiveness, while collectively they impress you with the vast strides in growth and development which Coral Gables has made in a few short years.



HEART OF THE



AMERICAN TROPICS

Executive Offices:
Administration Building,
Coral Gables, Miami, Florida

Branch Offices:
All Southern Cities and
Leading Cities of North



Residence of
C. F. Baldwin

THERE was once a time, and that not so long ago either, when it was the popular thing to say that no genuine art, but especially no genuine architecture, had ever been produced in America. Then some man in New York built a skyscraper. He did not go to Europe and bring home a plan made up of a piece of the Tower of London and a corner of the Cathedral of Milan, with a roof like Santa Sophia and a general flavor of bad Gothic. He actually sat down and considered the space in which he had to build and the practical needs of the people who were to use his building. And because he solved a definite local problem with beauty and dignity, people suddenly found that after all, in the skyscraper, America did possess a distinc-



tive American architecture. It may be a far cry from the skyscrapers of New York, huddled on the constricted ground of the most crowded island in the world, to the great sunswept glittering spaces of Coral Gables, where the horizon of South Florida seems the only boundary and the tremendous sky of South Florida the only limit.

Yet, far as they are apart, they have this in common, that the architects of even the most modest small house in Coral Gables, because they are solving an unique problem in building and solving it harmoniously and finely, are also increasing the scope and possibility of a great native American architecture.



Residence of
S. A. Ryan

CORAL GABLES

Miami Riviera



Residence of
Frank T. Budge

You must not get the idea that by the phrase "a genuine American architecture" is meant merely decoration, merely superficial ornament, merely the pretty at the expense of sound construction. America has suffered too much from that idea already. The houses of Coral Gables, like the skyscrapers of New York, are ample proof that when one speaks of architecture as a fine art one means first of all construction which is a practical solution of some specific local problem of living. When such solution is made with balance and harmony, with sincerity and dignity and beauty, so that in its right setting it seems the happy outgrowth of

CORAL GABLES



Miami Riviera



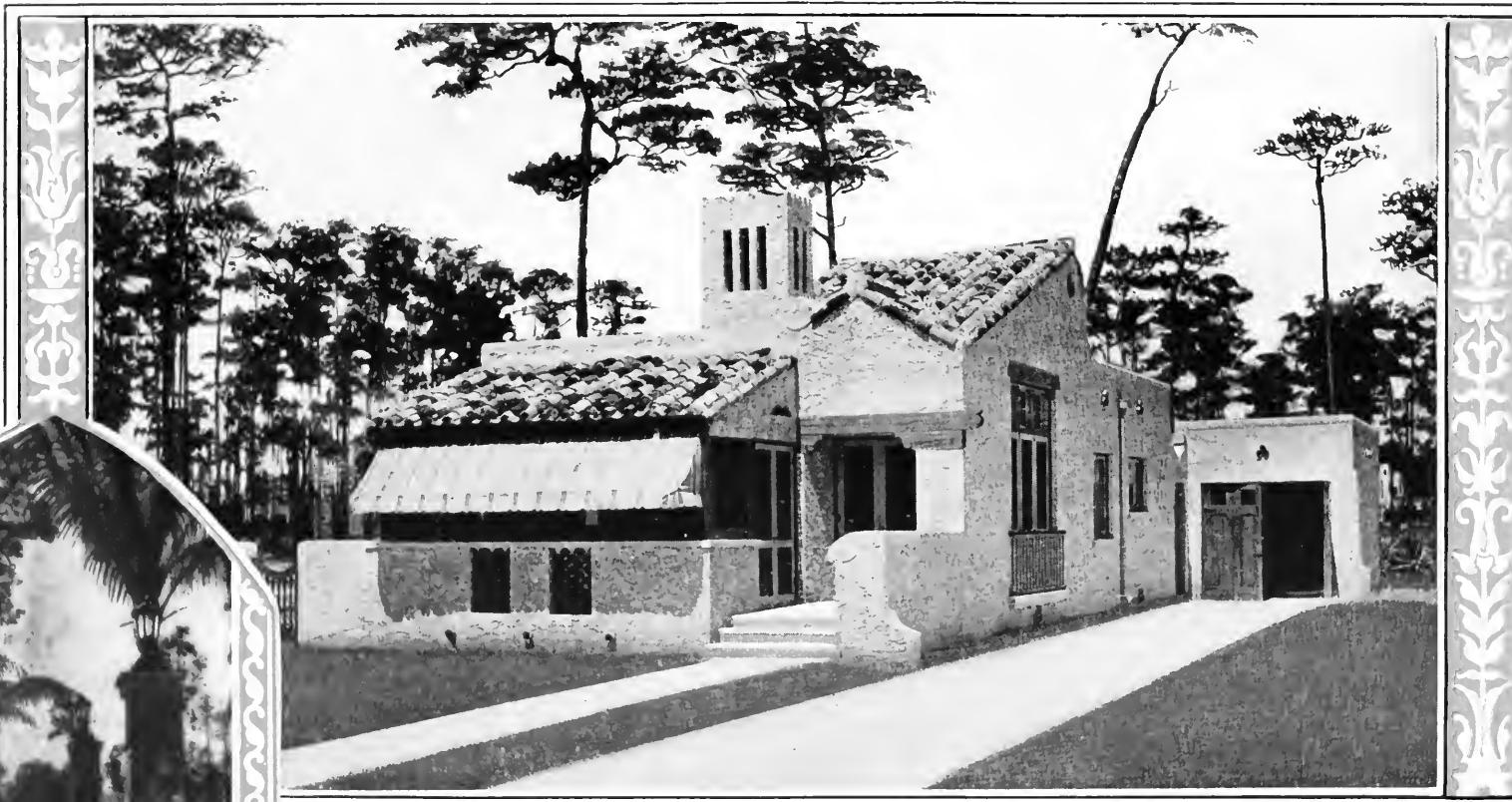
an environment to which it gives value and meaning, then you may be certain that you have at last architecture which is, as great architectures always have been, the most fundamental and important of the arts.

The homes of Coral Gables then are noteworthy as a new development of American architecture. They represent the solution of an unique problem. It would have been easier for their architects to have copied lavishly good things which have been built in more ancient places. They could have set the Colonial porticos of New England next to Swiss chalets suited

Residence of
W. T. Macfarlane

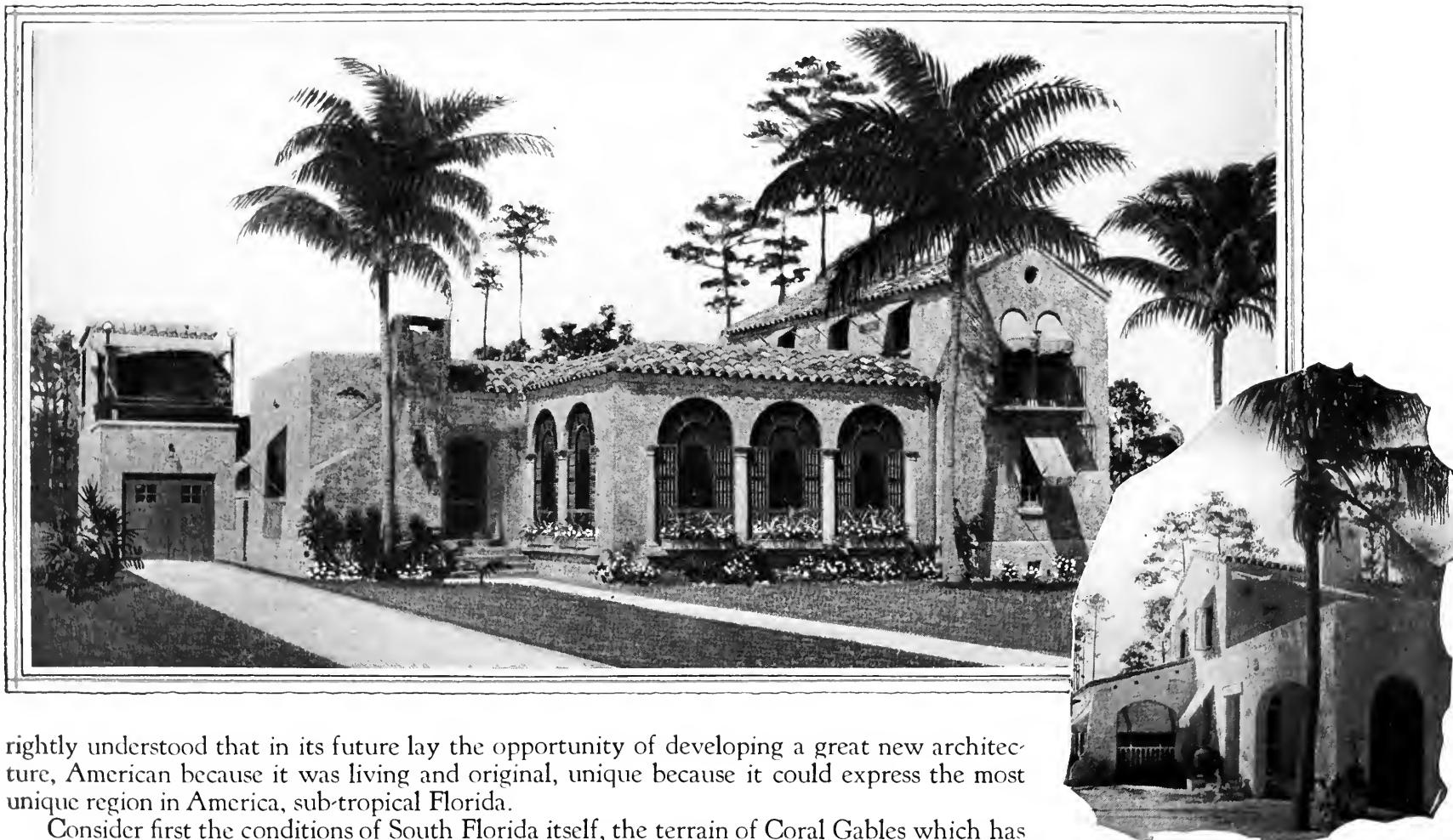
CORAL GABLES

Miami Riviera



Residence of
Dr. M. de Boe

to some craggy Alpine ledge. They could have jumbled together squat California bungalows with pillars made massive against possible earthquakes and half-timbered Elizabethan cottages from Stratford by way of Philadelphia suburbs, and alternated the whole hodge-podge with the ugly square cement packing boxes which have been the habit of the cheap Florida builder. Coral Gables by that method could have been made a dime museum of architectural abnormalities, a glorified architectural zoo. But by that method it could never have been Coral Gables. For the directing intelligence behind the whole creation of Coral Gables wisely and



rightly understood that in its future lay the opportunity of developing a great new architecture, American because it was living and original, unique because it could express the most unique region in America, sub-tropical Florida.

Consider first the conditions of South Florida itself, the terrain of Coral Gables which has made this architecture possible. The land is the floor of the world, wide and level, impressive as the sea which is its great neighbor and originator. Over it the vast dome of the sky pours a soft white radiance in which every leaf and bough and palmetto point is brilliantly visible

Residence of
Dr. Wm. McKibben

CORAL GABLES



Miami Riviera



Residence of
M. M. Milford

for miles, a light even more amazingly vivid than that which gave the reason for the clear simplicity of Greek architecture on the plains of Athens. The rare backgrounds of the Caribbean pines which in Coral Gables make a mural decoration between the earth and the sky, soften the distance everywhere with their repeated straightnesses topped by the gesture of their strange high boughs, Japanese perhaps, if not so fundamentally South Florida. These with the shining dark green masses of grapefruit and orange trees, the resplendent fountains of the cocoanut palms, as transition between the eternal simplicities of earth and sky, are the settings

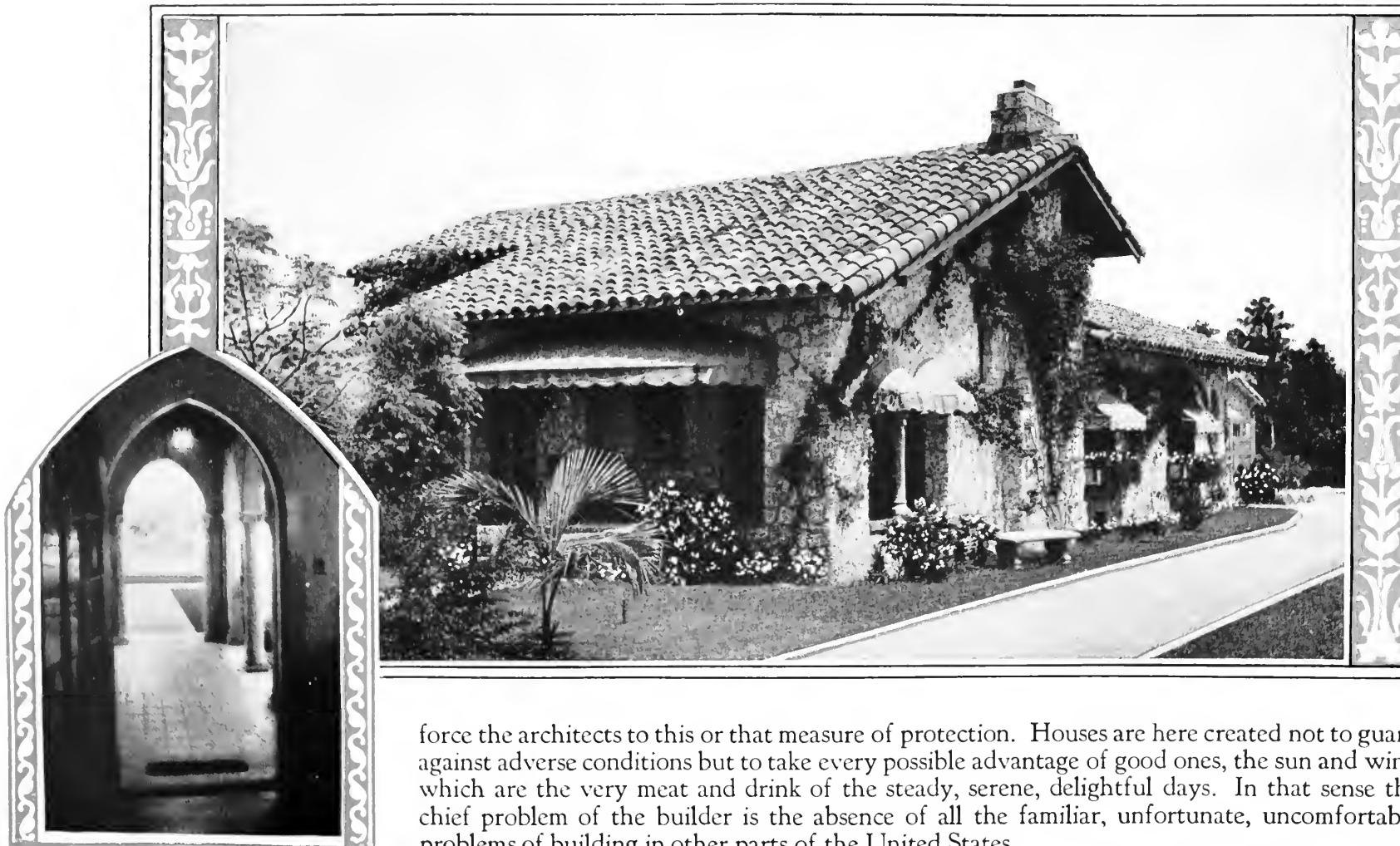
CORAL GABLES

Miami Riviera



for the houses of Coral Gables. The sun pours over everything its vast invigorating splendor. The trade winds from the purple thunder of the Gulf Stream beyond the outer beach surge steadily inland, one salt-sweet invincible tide. The brief bucketing tropic rains of August and September, under which the grass bristles with new green vigor and the trees grow tough and strong, are the only climatic conditions which builders must recognize. No snow, no frost, no sudden racking changes of temperature, no earthquakes, no devastating thunderstorms, no blistering hot winds, no fogs, no humidity, no temperamental uncertainties of mere weather

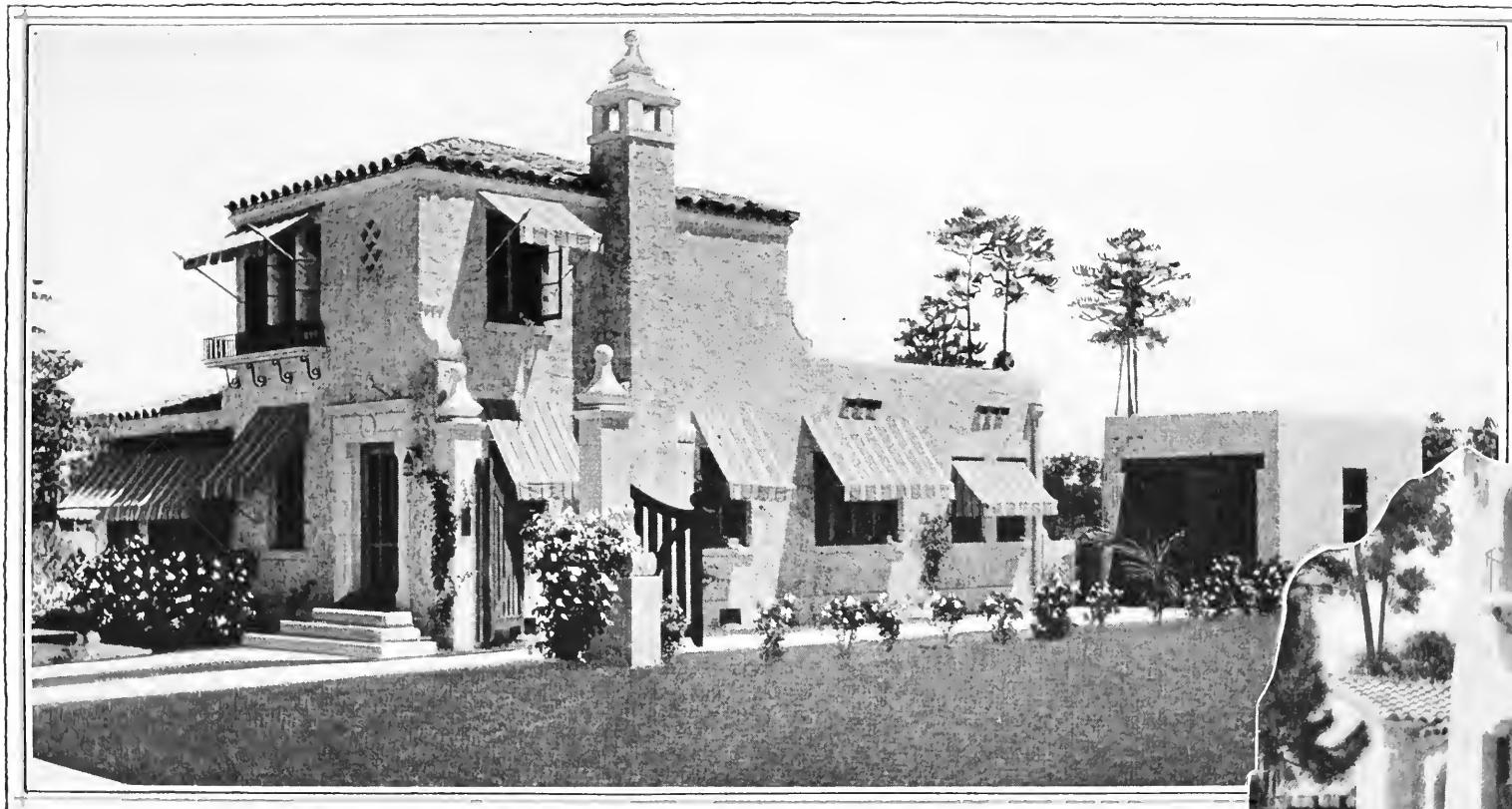
Residence of
Fred Ball, Jr.



Residence of
J. M. Stabile

force the architects to this or that measure of protection. Houses are here created not to guard against adverse conditions but to take every possible advantage of good ones, the sun and wind which are the very meat and drink of the steady, serene, delightful days. In that sense the chief problem of the builder is the absence of all the familiar, unfortunate, uncomfortable problems of building in other parts of the United States.

After geography and climate, the necessities of living, the habits of the people themselves and finally the actual building materials shape and define architectural style. The skyscrapers



of New York were created because hordes of people were forced to do indoor work in a section of earth too small for them. Offices were therefore piled on offices and the whole structure made unique out of harsh necessity. But in Coral Gables necessity is not harsh. Here there is no lack of room, no hint of overcrowding, in the first place, and in the second, not the consideration of work as separated from life but that of harmonious and delightful living, which gives meaning to these homes. Patios and verandahs and wide living rooms, bedrooms that are sleeping porches, and kitchens more than half windows or all porch can here be de-

Residence of
W. E. O'Neill

CORAL GABLES



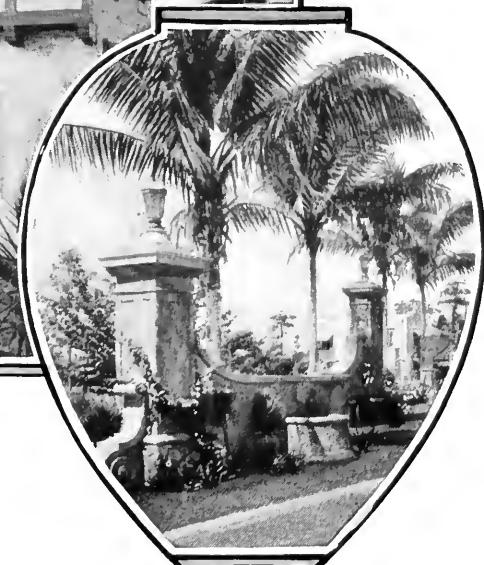
Miami Riviera



Residence of
Harold Weston



veloped to their freest and most charming possibilities. By the picture of one of these Coral Gables homes you can read that people here have learned that living itself is an art of which work is a dignified and necessary part, if it is only housework, but in which also leisure is made rich and interesting and valuable. These patios and loggias are not just decorations but a vital part of the scheme and habit of pleasant living. Sunsets and moonlights are by them made household ornaments which these homes are built to include. Orange blossoms and thunbergia vines and jasmines and night-blooming cereus are here made friends of the household,



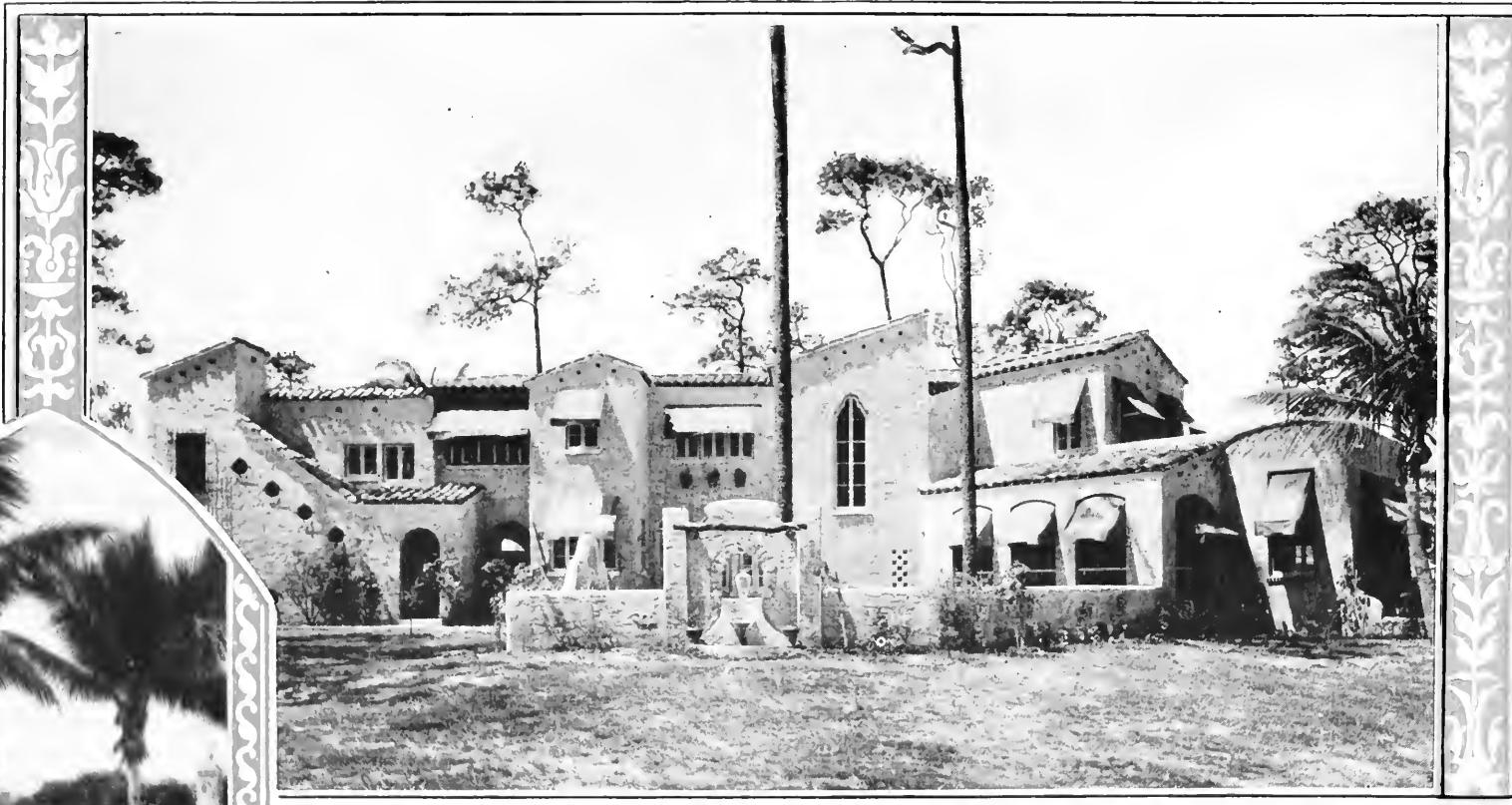
along with the ecstatic ripples of the mocking bird's song in moonlight and the green-gold blur of humming birds' wings.

These are all parts of the things which the architects of Coral Gables considered, along with the practical considerations of the efficient, ultra-modern housewife whose work must be done with the least possible wasted efforts and the highest degree of comfort and sanitation. "Architecture," William Morris said, "is the art of creating a building with all the appliances fit for carrying on a dignified and happy life." The architects of Coral Gables think likewise.

Residence of
O. D. Gray

CORAL GABLES

Miami Riviera



Residence of
W. L. Williams

And in the final consideration of what makes architectural style, the architects of Coral Gables found the unique local material called "coral rock," the very bony structure of South Florida itself, easily workable, fascinating and mellow in use. They did not try to import alien materials. They knew that houses are most harmonious when built with the materials of their locality. Native rock, then, and stucco on cement tile blocks made in Coral Gables, are the fundamentals of its construction.

It was the wise old French architect and master builder Viollet-le-duc, who said that which



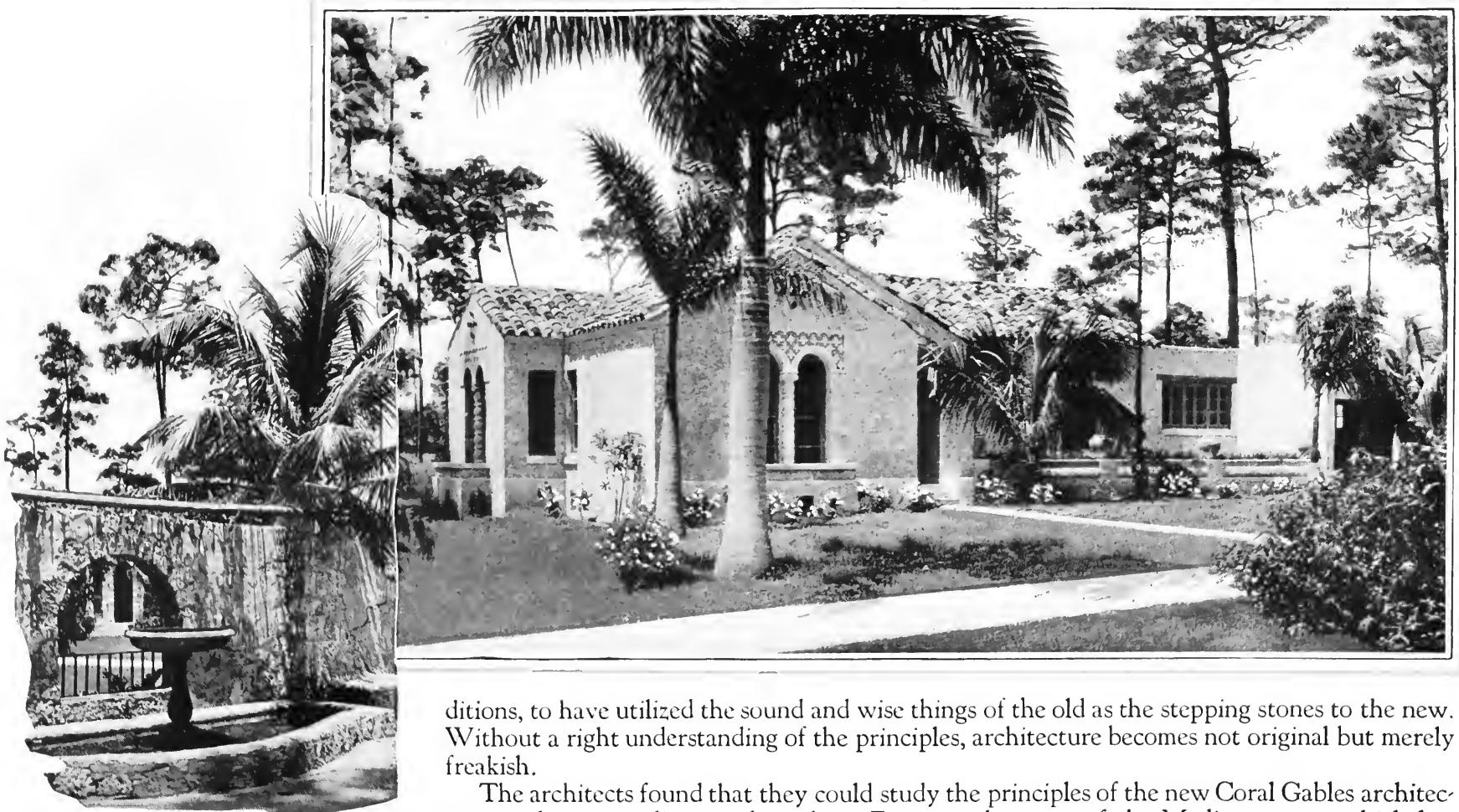
points the way to the next consideration. "The greatest things of art come into existence," he said, and of course he was thinking first of architecture, "only when there is a deep and widespread interest in the production of works of art, together with a parallel conformity and widespread comprehension of the principles of art." It would not have been enough to have known the unique quality of Coral Gables and the opportunities of its development, to have made it at once beautiful and remarkable. It was necessary that its architects should know intimately the finest things that have been built by great builders in approximately like con-

Residence of
Telfair Knight

CORAL GABLES



Miami Riviera



Residence of
J. J. L. Phillips

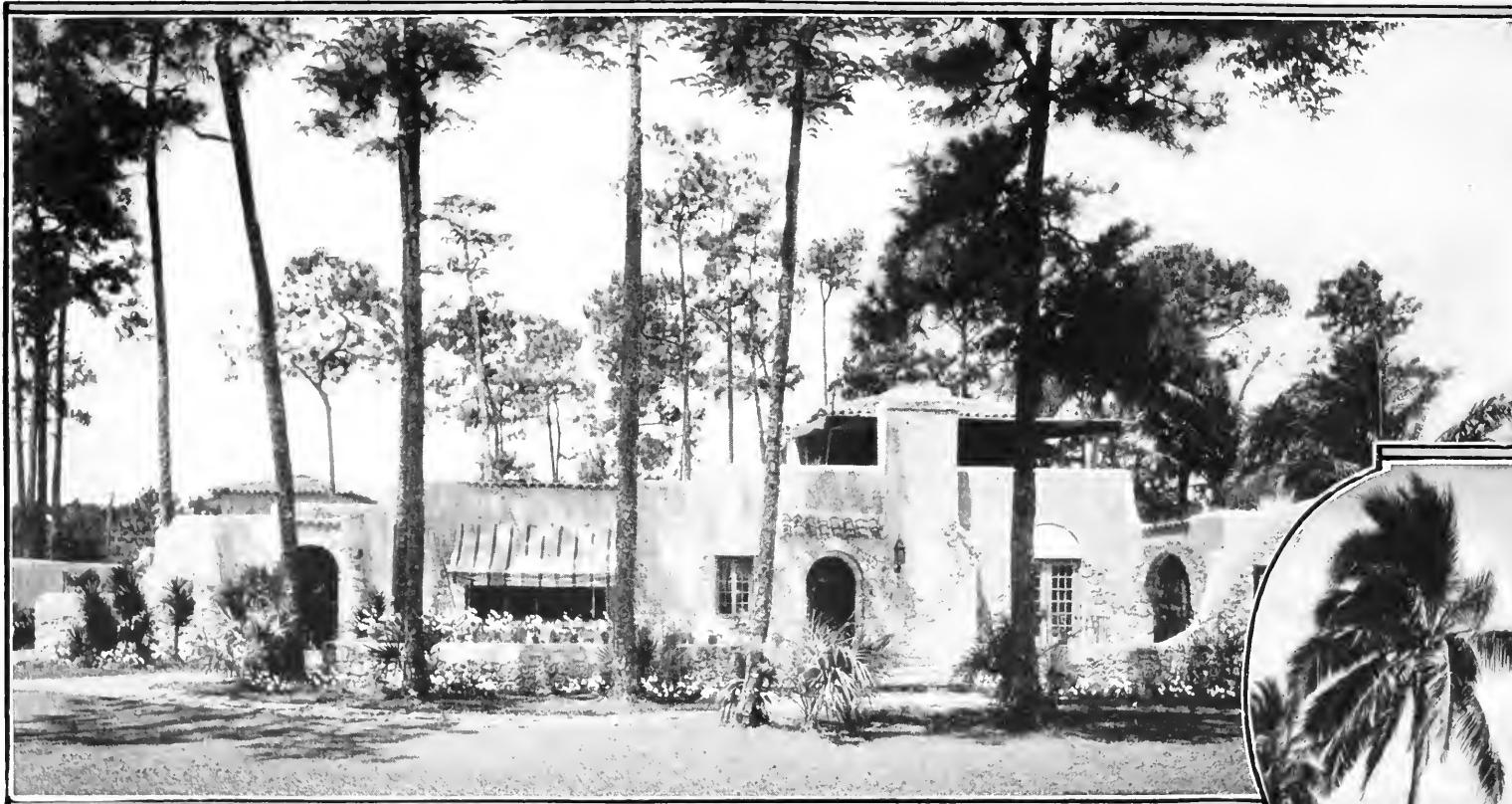
ditions, to have utilized the sound and wise things of the old as the stepping stones to the new. Without a right understanding of the principles, architecture becomes not original but merely freakish.

The architects found that they could study the principles of the new Coral Gables architecture in that great district of southern Europe—the coast of the Mediterranean, which has been the fountain-head of architecture for centuries, a district unified in spite of the differences in history and race and locality, by the similarity of its climatic and living conditions. The

CORAL GABLES



Miami Riviera

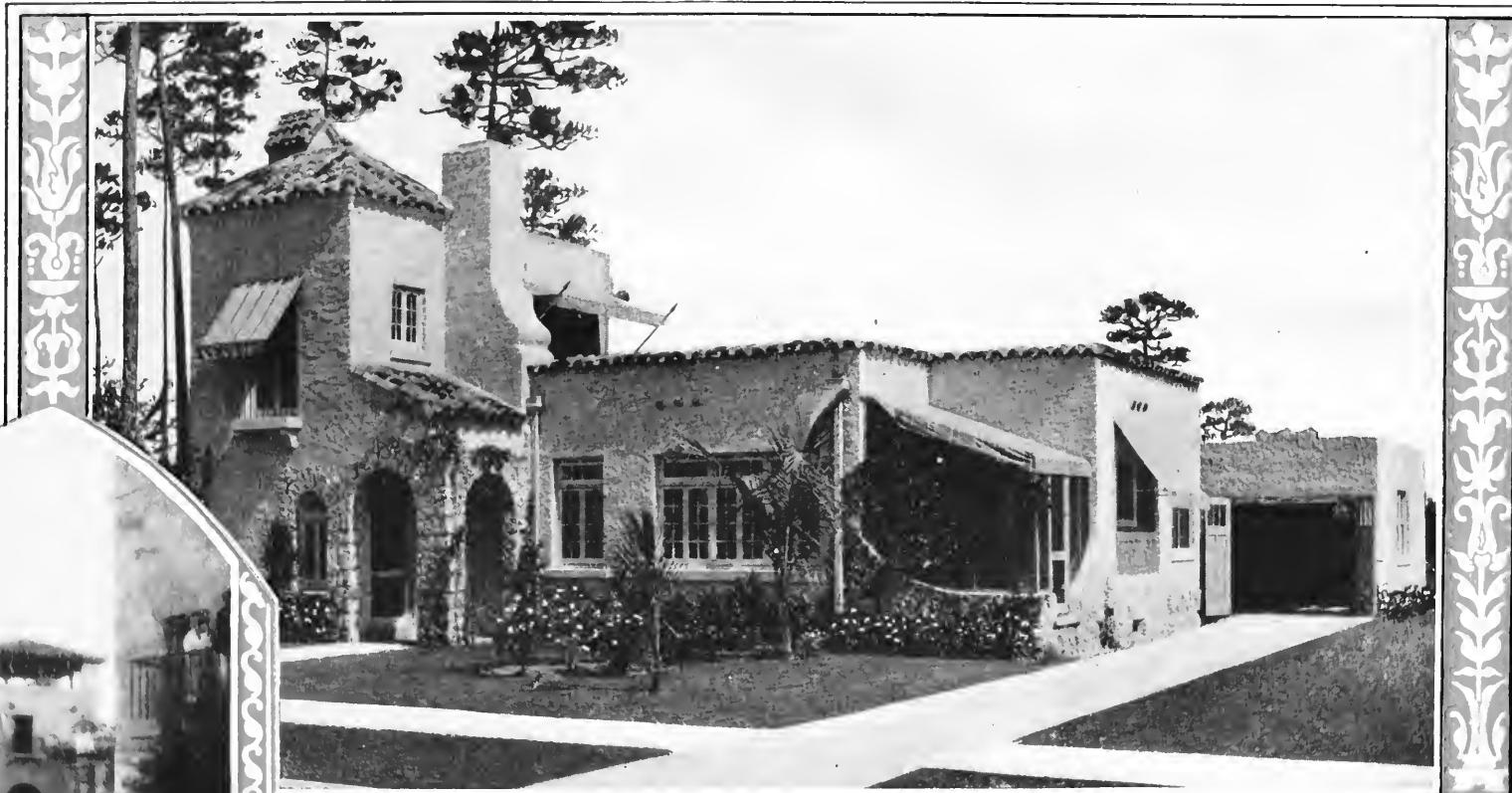


level plains about Athens, and that far-gleaming rock of the Acropolis, over which the sea winds beat and a sun only a little less vastly radiant than the sun of South Florida brings its people out of doors, are easily comparable to the conditions of Coral Gables. Venice, with its domes and campaniles rising from the blue reaches of the Adriatic, backed by wide acres of marshy meadows, with no heights except the distant snowy peaks of the Dolomites, less imminent than the glorious domed whiteness of gulf clouds, those galleons adrift in the blue over Coral Gables, is sister country. All the mellow ancient cities on the coastal plains, however

Residence of
George E. Merrick

CORAL GABLES

Miami Riviera



Residence of
Mrs. J. Erwin

narrow, of the Italian and French Riviera, the stained walls and subtle-colored tiling of the table land of Spain, Tuscan villages sprawled in the sun beside their vineyards, and the roses and sophistication of the Cote d' Or, all these are related, in spite of their local variants, related by the sea and the sun to each other, and so related to Coral Gables. Nearer than the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, which has been called the American Mediterranean, and for which South Florida is building the great future metropolis, brings to the architecture of Coral Gables the flavor of old Spanish cities, rooted on the strangest and oldest civilization in

CORAL GABLES



Miami Riviera



the world, the Aztec and the Mayan, with their adaptations of the Mediterranean style, more tropic, more vivid, more subtly pan-American, Havana and old Panama, Cartagena and Mexico City, Venezuela, St. Thomas and Fort de France. So that to understand the best principles of this art whose total we might call tropic Mediterranean, from which they were to derive the new art which has found expression in Coral Gables, they had to understand all the fundamentals of it, Greek and Roman, Byzantine and Italian Renaissance, Romanesque and Hispano-Moresque, and such Gothic as reached to the Mediterranean. Out of all this

Residence of
Don Peabody

CORAL GABLES

Miami Riviera



Residence of
F. E. Dix

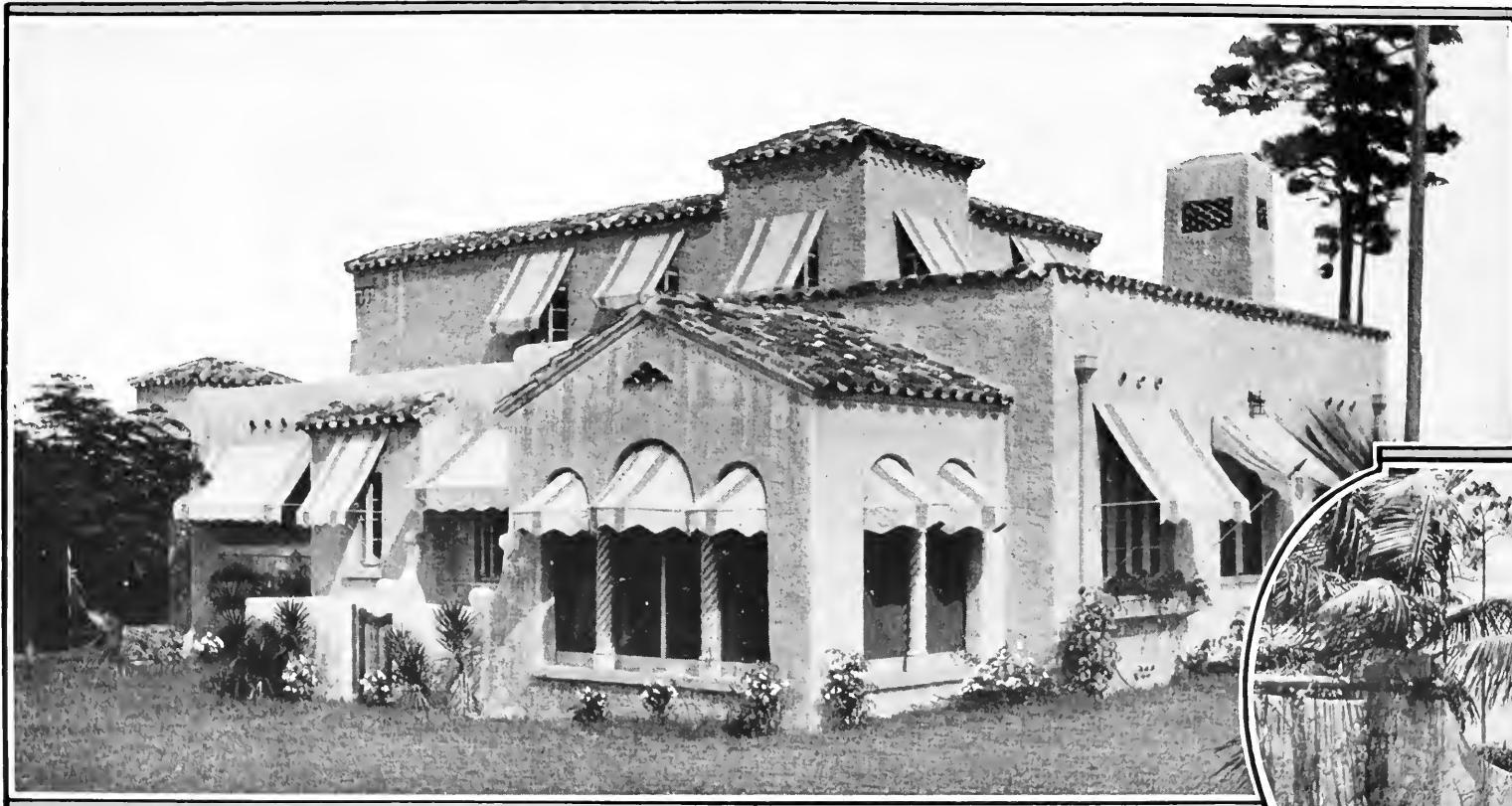
they had to seek the great things which must persist. Out of all this they had to retain and adapt and finally to create.

What are its characteristics? Ride up one street in Coral Gables and down another. Study the related lovely lines of tile roofs beyond the golf links, or the glimpses of walls rising beyond the fountains and vines of some of the sunswept plazas. You can trace the principles everywhere, from the most modest little home to the great houses and hotel buildings. You can read in wall and arch and roof, in charm of detail, in shadow line, in color, in mass and

CORAL GABLES



Miami Riviera



window group and the most inconspicuous decoration the kinship of this architecture to the older excellencies. And then, savoring the whole tone and atmosphere of this region you can completely understand the vigor, the fine stimulus, the genuine uniqueness and value of the new architecture in itself.

These are the principles. The characteristics of the great Greek architecture were simplicity and clarity. It was the art of clear skies and bright sun and clear, hard, reasonable thinking, with nature, earth and sky and sea, its only passion. The builders of Coral Gables have built

Residence of
Fred Becht

CORAL GABLES

Miami Riviera



Residence of
Miss E. R. Breckenridge

with an almost Greek simplicity. They depend on fine construction first, noble wall space, beautiful proportions, not superficial decoration, for their effects. And like the Greeks is their feeling for the great presence of the sky and the earth, the rare, abundant, exuberant thing nature shows herself to be in these lavish sub-tropics.

The characteristics of the great Roman architecture were practical common sense, the solution of engineering problems, sanitation and water supply, housing and labor. They gave to these architects a passion for splendid mass, great accomplishments, solidity, permanence.



The Roman arch, the greatest achievement of the Romans, with its noble relation of thrust to supporting mass, which is repeated constantly in later Italian and Spanish building, the architects of Coral Gables use over and over again with a most satisfying sweep and breadth and effectiveness. It was the Romans who first developed the use of concrete, too, making the arch one solid unit, which foreshadowed the Coral Gables use of stucco over cement tile blocks, by which arches could be lifted without too great a bulk of masonry or without the supporting piers and buttresses of the Gothic. The pointed arches of the Gothic, or rather as developed

Residence of
E. E. Dammers

CORAL GABLES



Miami Riviera



Residence of
W. A. Macfarlane

in the Saracenic, are used often in Coral Gables for their grace and lightness, but not so much as a structural necessity. In all the larger colonnades, the breadth and bigness, the mass and simplicity of the Romans, whether derived through Italian or Spanish, are marvelously adapted to the fine far spaces, the great vistas, of Coral Gables. And finally that influence on Mediterranean art which might be called in general Oriental, whether the more direct effect of the Byzantine on the north of Italy, at Venice or Ravenna, or that whole vital and individual school of the Saracens in Spain, whose blend is called Hispano-Moresque, has also had its in-



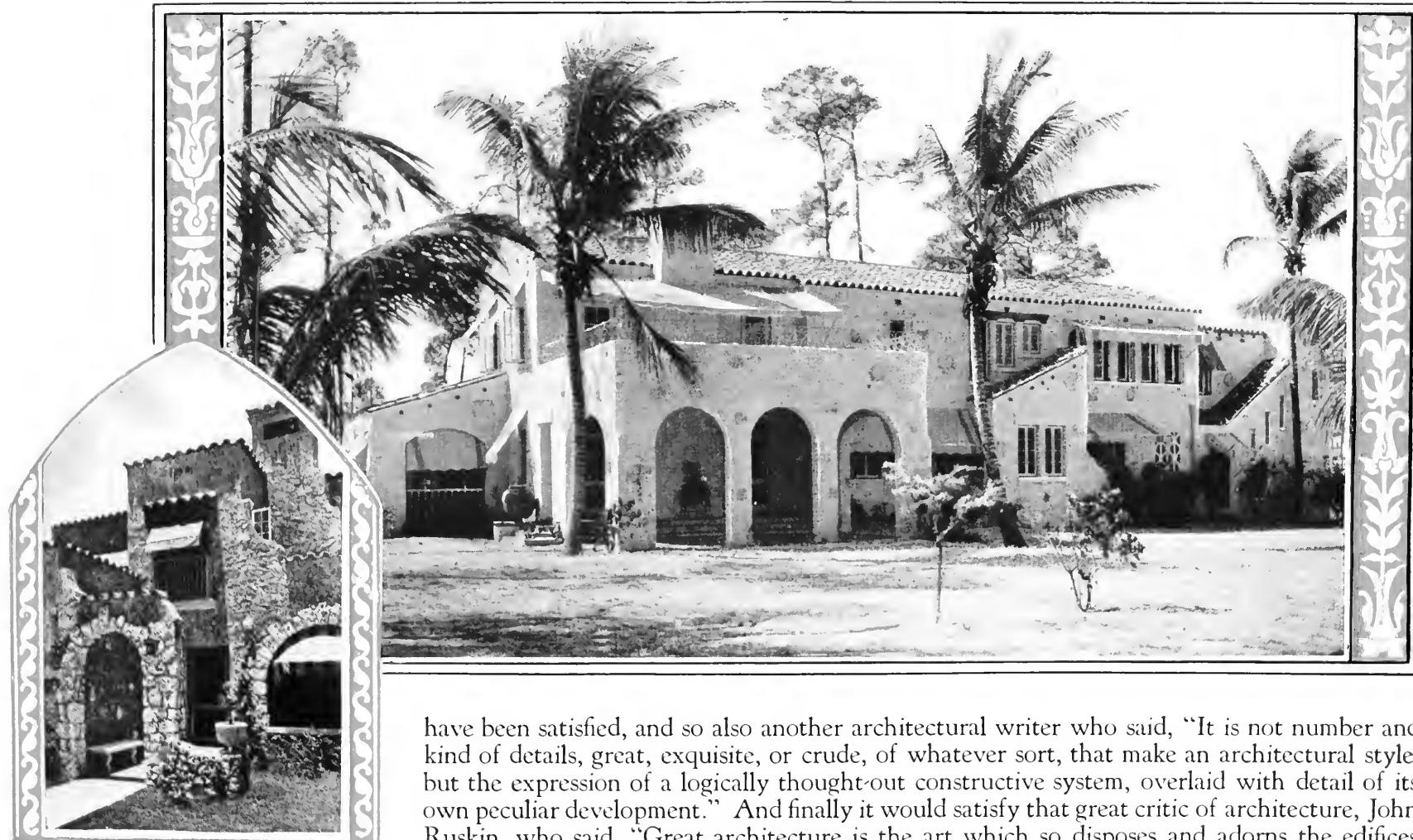
fluence on Coral Gables. The characteristic of the Oriental, in principle, is a subtle decorative formality. Their passion is not for structure or for mass but for design, design which deals beautifully with lines and curves and spaces and angles, which makes lace of stonework and loveliness of unimaginative materials. That delight in design the architects of Coral Gables have shared. In beautiful and simple construction, in arches and in masses, in design which makes everything harmonious, the architects of Coral Gables have followed the great masters, have rooted their work in with the roots of the greatest. In that respect Viollet-le-duc would

Residence of
L. A. Jones

CORAL GABLES



Miami Riviera



Residence of
C. W. De Long

have been satisfied, and so also another architectural writer who said, "It is not number and kind of details, great, exquisite, or crude, of whatever sort, that make an architectural style, but the expression of a logically thought-out constructive system, overlaid with detail of its own peculiar development." And finally it would satisfy that great critic of architecture, John Ruskin, who said, "Great architecture is the art which so disposes and adorns the edifices raised by man for whatever purposes, that the sight of them contributes to his mental health, power and pleasure."



These are the principles. The characteristics of the architecture of Coral Gables, then, are these. Walls of tinted stucco, where also the native rock, warmed to cream and soft brown and old amber in the sun, is used as occasional window trim or ledge or wall finish, are raised to enclose rooms open at every side to the air. The rough surface of the walls catches the changing light, the shadows of decoration or leaf, until they seem a very part of the earth on which they are built. Always these walls are longer than they are high, so that the mass of the house does not seem to struggle against the great level earth, but to harmonize with it and by subtle

Granada Boulevard
showing Granada Plaza

CORAL GABLES

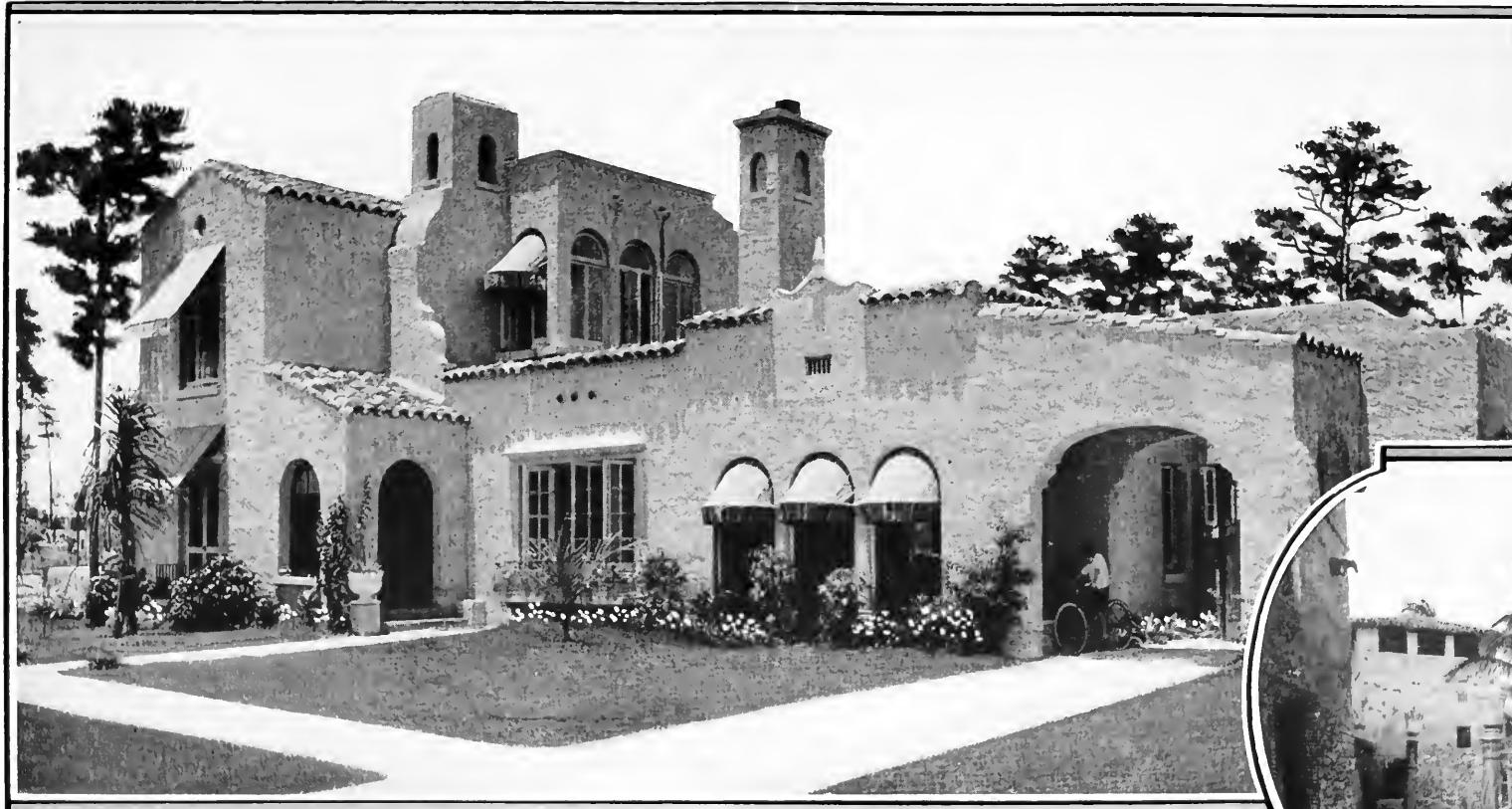
Miami Riviera



Residence of
Mrs. Annie Post

curves or abutments, by the right use of sloping roofs and awnings and broken planes, become related and tied to the ground. In a hundred inconspicuous ways these homes are made to seem grown, rather than built. The tendency to abrupt, naked packing-box effects is everywhere carefully avoided.

These houses stand out against the sky, with no hills behind. Roofs are always indicative, also. Roofs built for snow must pitch sharply. Roofs built in woody country can be gabled and overlaid with dormers. But these roofs bear only the sun. Under them there must be air. As a result, there is only a slight pitch to them. They meet the walls at just the right angle



to shed the rains of the rainy season. They must not gather heat. Highly glazed, cheap commercial tiles, slate or shingles are here highly impossible. Old hand-made Spanish tiles, soft glazed, blended in the loveliest browns and dull reds and ochres and siennas in the world, top the mellow walls with exactly the right emphasis. The sun is not harsh upon them, only infinitely at home. Their colors lead to the splendid harmonies of the awnings which shade the windows, awnings chosen by artists to blend not only with the whole picture of the house, but with the whole picture of the street, olive green and brown and mahogany and cream and orange and black—masterpieces, every one.

Residence of
W. J. Grant

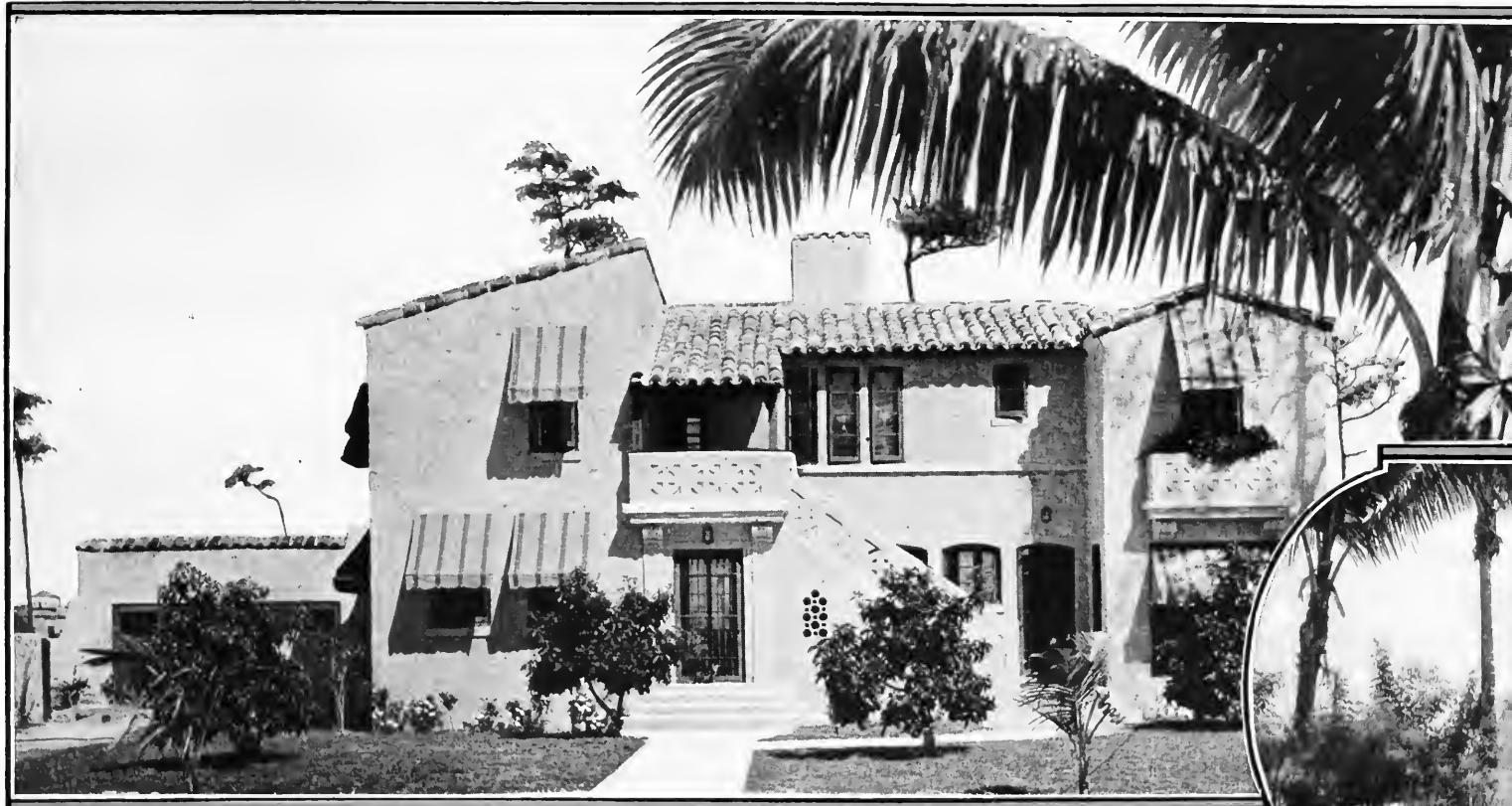
CORAL GABLES

Miami Riviera



Residence of
C. H. W. Read

Everywhere, breaking the plain practicalities of walls and roofs, windows and doors in Coral Gables are made not only important in the practical living plan, but parts of the whole decoration. A group of arched windows finely breaks the plain square of a wall. The whole front of one house, with exquisitely simple roof lines and wall mass, is opened by a tripled arched verandah topped by a loggia whose delicate columns repeat the decoration of the capital of the arches below. A small house, in which every detail is a joy, is made beautiful with a cloistered entrance whose slightly pointed arched and carved columns lead to an open patio, as finely thought out and executed as a Renaissance palace, and as beautiful in its set-



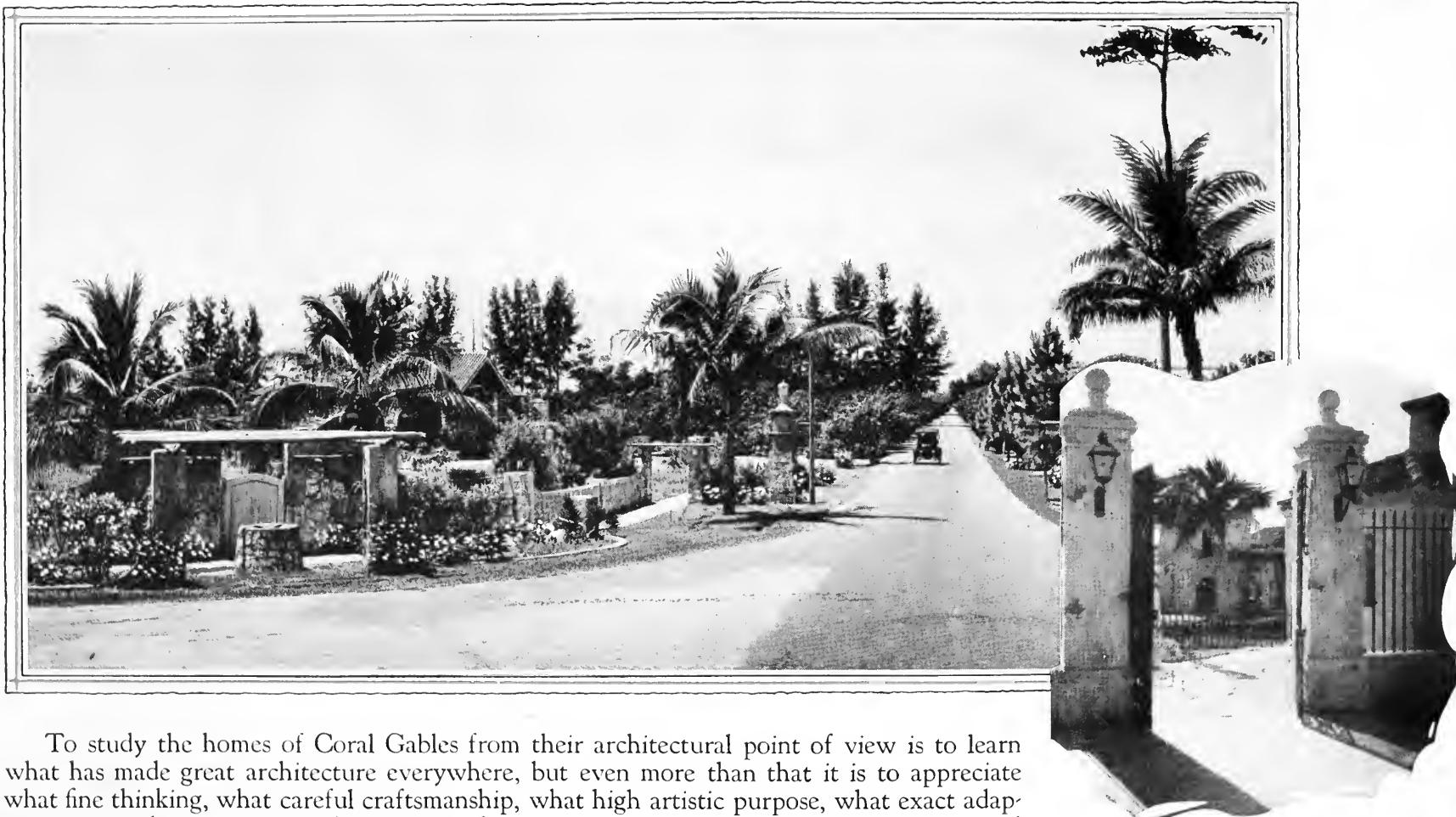
ting. Another small house whose wall spaces are unusually simple, has as its chief decoration an entrance loggia with a group of three round arches, the middle slightly higher than the other two, separated by twisted columns so delicate and right that no other decoration is necessary. Even grouped ventilator holes are made to play a delightful part in the design of a whole house front, and such inconspicuous details as the iron work of a window, the trim of a chimney, the curve of a garage roof following the pattern of the house roof, the right placing of a huge Spanish water jar to break the surface pattern of an open verandah, are harmonious, stylized, architecturally right.

Residence of
Edward T. Purcell

CORAL GABLES



Miami Riviera



To study the homes of Coral Gables from their architectural point of view is to learn what has made great architecture everywhere, but even more than that it is to appreciate what fine thinking, what careful craftsmanship, what high artistic purpose, what exact adaptation to needs, must go into the creation of an architectural style so unquestionably original and valuable as this of Coral Gables. To live with them for even a few days is to recognize how living may be made richer and finer because beauty has been put to its right uses. And it is to realize with a new thrill that here a great new school of American architecture is created.

*Coral Way from
Balboa Plaza*



